

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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SUBJ: FURTHER BORDER PROBLEMS

REF: A) PORT MORESBY 0688, B) USDAO JAKARTA 030245Z JUN 77

1 PRESS REPORTS OF CONSIDERABLE ACTIVITY IN THE PNG/INDONESIAN BORDER AREAS CONTINUE. LAST WEEK IT WAS REPORTED THAT TWO INDONESIAN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED IN A CLASH WITH PNG VILLAGERS AND THAT THE VILLAGE CONCERNED HAD BEEN ABANDONED OUT OF FEAR OF INDONESIAN RETALIATION. RADIO JAKARTA REPORTED THAT TWO SOLDIERS HAD BEEN KILLED "SOUTH OF JAYAPURA", WHICH COULD APPLY EQUALLY TO THE BALIEM VALLEY OR TO PNG BORDER AREA. A FURTHER 60 VILLAGERS HAVE BEEN REPORTED AS CROSSING TO PNG WEST SEPIK PROVINCE DUE TO FEAR OF INDONESIAN FORCES NOW IN AREA. THIS IS THIRD GROUP TO CROSS BORDER SINCE MID-MAY.

2. GPNG REACTION TO BORDER PROBLEMS HAS BEEN DISORGANIZED AND CONFUSED. PRIME MINISTER SOMARE RETURNED FROM A CAMPAIGN TRIP AND, AFTER AN OBVIOUSLY INCOMPLETE BRIEFING, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE, TOGETHER WITH FONMIN KIKI AND FONSEC SIAGURU. CONFERENCE WAS REplete WITH MISSTATEMENTS AND CONTRADICTIONARY ANSWERS WHICH APTLY ILLUSTRATED THE CURRENT STATE OF CONFUSION. AT ONE POINT SOMARE STATED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED AN
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UP-TO-DATE INTELLIGENCE REPORT ON BORDER SITUATION AT ONE O'CLOCK PREVIOUS AFTERNOON FROM GPNG INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN WEST SEPIK. REPORTES REMINDED HIM THAT THAT OFFICER HAD BEEN IN PORT MORESBY FOR OVER A WEEK AND COULD THUS HARDLY BE SOURCE OF UP-TO-DATE INTELLIGENCE.

3. AMONG POINTS THAT SOMARE MADE SPECIFICALLY WERE THAT:

A. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF A PNG CITIZEN BEING KILLED BY INDONESIAN FORCES AS HAS BEEN REPORTED.

B. ONLY 218 VILLAGERS HAD CROSSED BORDER (FONMIN KIKI HAD EARLIER ANNOUNCED FIGURE OF 490 FOR ONE GROUP GOING TO WESTERN PROVINCE.) THE 218 VILLAGERS INCLUDE THE TWO GROUPS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED AS CROSSING INTO PNG.

C. NO INDONESIAN SOLDIERS HAD BEEN KILLED WITHIN PNG AND NO PNG VILLAGE IN AREA HAD BEEN DESERTED.

D. REFUGEES HAD AGREED TO RETURN ACROSS BORDER.

E. FINALLY, HE CONSIDERED PRESS REPORTING ON BORDER PROBLEMS TO BE IRRESPONSIBLE.

4. UNDP RESREP TOM UNWIN RETURNED NEXT DAY FROM SOMARE-APPROVED VISIT TO REFUGEE CAMP AND REPORTED REFUGEES HAD NOT AGREED TO RETURN INDONESIA AND THEY WERE SATISFIED BY THEIR TREATMENT THUS FAR BY GPNG.

5. AUSTRALIAN HICOM OFFICIALS WHO HAVE ACCESS TO GPNG INTELLIGENCE VIEW PRESS REPORTS AS OVERSTATED, THOUGH CONCEDED THAT INTELLIGENCE IS INCOMPLETE AND CONTRADICTORY. SPECIFICALLY, THE PNG VILLAGER WAS KILLED ON INDONESIAN SOIL AND THE INDONESIAN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED IN BALIEM VALLEY RATHER THAN IN PNG.

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6. UNITED PARTY LEADER TEI ABAL CALLED LAST WEEK FOR UN TO HANDLE ALL CASES OF BORDER CROSSINGS.

7. INDONESIANS SEEM TO HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT IRRITATED WITH GPNG'S HANDLING OF REFUGEE MATTER. INDONESIAN EMBASSY IN PORT MORESBY REPLIED TO GPNG REQUEST FOR SAFETY GUARANTEES FOR RETURNING REFUGEES WITH COMMENT THAT NO GUARANTEES WERE NECESSARY AS REFUGEES WERE "JUST VILLAGERS", INDON EMBASSY ALSO LODGED FORMAL PROTEST WITH PORT MORESBY UN OFFICE OVER ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE MATTER.

8. COMMENT: GPNG REACTION TO EVENTS IN BORDER AREA IS LIKELY TO REMAIN CONFUSED, AS SOMARE IS NOW IN LONDON, LEAVING DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER KIKI IN CHARGE OF SITUATION. KIKI IS FAR TOO INVOLVED IN A TOUGH REELECTION CAMPAIGN TO DEVOTE TIME TO THE PROBLEM.
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